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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2525

Sept. 27, 1991

CROP AREA DOWN -- 338 million acres were forecast to be used for crops this year, down 3 million from 1990, and well below the peak of 387 million acres set in 1981. Cropland declined in all regions except the Corn Belt and Lake States. 63 million acres were idled under Federal programs. Producers didn't take full advantage of the new planting flexibility in the 1990 Farm Act. A potential 33 million acres could have been flexed, but only 7.5 million acres were involved. Farmers continued to plant the program crop. **Contact: Merritt Padgitt** (202) 219-0433.

PECAN CROP AT RISK -- Aphids have infested southeastern pecan orchards, threatening this fall's crop and next year's. **H. C. Ellis**, a pecan expert with the University of Georgia Extension Service, says its the heaviest population of black pecan aphids in the region in years. Numbers range as high as 75 aphids per leaf; an average of three to four was considered unusually high. **Contact: Susan Brown** (912) 386-3203.

RESERVOIR LEVELS -- Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Washington have above normal water storage this year. But acute shortages remain in Nevada, with only 15 percent normal, California at 64 percent, and Oregon and Utah with less than 70 percent normal. The drought in California has limited water supplies used for irrigation, hydroelectric power generation, recreation and wildlife habitat. California irrigation is down 700,000 acres since 1988 due to continuing drought. **Contact: Ray Motha** (202) 447-5716.

FIELD TESTING -- USDA has issued 23 permits to commercial companies and research institutions for field testing genetically engineered crop plants. The work will examine efforts to boost resistance to pests and disease, enhance food or fiber quality and increase production efficiency. "USDA has regulated biotechnology since 1987 by issuing permits for limited, controlled field trials with genetically engineered crops in small, isolated plots," says **Terry L. Medley**, director of Biotechnology, Biologics, and Environmental Protection for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. **Contact: Amichai Heppner** (301) 436-5222.

PACKING AND MOVING -- The red meat packing industry is moving out of larger metropolitan areas into smaller nonmetro communities. Based on the experience of the 1980's, when growing concentration began to transform the industry, research shows that cattle feedlot operations have also been on the move. They have shifted from the western Corn Belt and Lake States to the Plains. Changes and innovations in the beef industry, and improved refrigeration technologies, have helped the industry move away from final demand markets to the site of raw inputs such as grain-fattened cattle in the Plains. The restructuring between red meat producers and the poultry industry is expected to offer new opportunities for nonmetro job growth in the industry. **Contact: Dennis Brown** (202) 219-0494.

SALAD DAYS FOR FRUIT -- Record-high grower prices for oranges, apples, and pears have raised the all-fruit index of grower prices for fresh and processing fruit far above the level of previous years. Although the August index dropped eight percent from its record high in June, it remained almost 90 percent above its August 1990 level. A smaller pear crop, lower apple production in the West, and continued short supply of fresh oranges will keep upward pressure on prices throughout the fall. The index is not expected to recede until the harvest of Florida's new citrus crop begins later this year. **Contact: Dennis Shields** (202) 219-0884.

PRODUCTION IS UP -- Higher production of beef, pork, and poultry is expected this fall, continuing through 1992. Larger supplies of all meats are exerting downward pressure on retail prices. Higher feed costs combined with lower hog prices will likely slow hog herd expansion. Near-record peanut and cotton crops are expected this year. Sugar output is forecast to reach record levels, but the pace of consumption is not expected to keep up with supply. Hawaii's sugar producers are pressured by low returns, company mergers and exits, and high labor and marketing costs. Once the source of nearly 40 percent of U.S. cane sugar, Hawaii produced only 26 per cent in 1990. **Contact: Barbara Claffey** (202) 219-0313.

U.S. AG EXPORTS -- With lower exports, and imports unchanged from last year, the U.S. agricultural trade surplus is likely to total \$15 billion, down \$2.5 billion from the level of a year ago. U.S. ag exports are forecast to reach \$37 billion this year. Improved prospects for soybeans, soybean meal, and high-value products more than offset a weaker outlook for U.S. wheat and coarse grains. Exports of high-value products are expected to continue rising to a record high, boosted by favorable exchange rates, economic growth in major markets, and U.S. market promotion overseas. **Contact: Michael Dwyer** (202) 382-1295.

FOREST PRODUCTS -- The forest industry comprises 14 percent of total U.S. agricultural exports. In 1990 the U.S. exported \$6.5 billion worth of forest products and imported \$5.3 billion. Japan continues as the leading importer of wood products, accounting for 43 percent of the U.S. wood export market. Canada is a major competitor and yet is one of the best customers for U.S. forest products, ranking as the second largest market, Korea is third, Mexico fourth, and the European community fifth. The U.S. became a net exporter of forest products in 1988. **Contact: Aileen T. Mannix** (202) 382-9149.

SWATTING THE HESSIAN FLY -- Researchers with USDA's Agricultural Research Service have successfully inserted the Hessian Fly resistance of rye into wheat. Tests were recently conducted in a greenhouse at Kansas State University verifying the resistance. The wheat will be made available within the coming year to both public and private wheat breeders for use in development of new Hessian-fly-resistant varieties. The fly is genetically adaptable, wheat varieties deployed for more than 10 years lose their effectiveness. Rye is a poor host for the pest and it is believed that the rye genes will be more durable than those in wheat. **Contact: J. H. Hatchett** (913) 532-6154.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1790 -- As the number of doctors, nurses and hospitals in rural areas declines, health care in Rural America faces a big problem. Brenda Curtis talks with several experts concerned about the state of health care in rural area. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1272 -- A fall color spectacular?; the vanishing country doctor; the organic food difference; tips for home landscaping; aging and nutrition. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1779 -- USDA news highlights, health care in farm country; Soviet food needs; farmers urged to maintain ACR land; U.S. farm products "down under". (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1439 -- Vitamin C & cataracts; What causes cataracts?; making a gene map; toward leaner lamb; "mapping" for disease resistance. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- (These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling!)

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

FEATURES -- **DeBoria Janifer** reports on improving school lunches; **Dave Luciani** takes a look at frost-free gardens.

ACTUALITIES -- **Christopher Goldthwait**, USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service, giving testimony before the House Committee on Agriculture, on the recent trip to the Soviet Union to assess food needs, USDA meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on weather and crops; Deputy Undersecretary **John Campbell**, in testimony before the House Committee on Agriculture, on the success of USDA's Export Promotions programs, USDA economist **Barbara Claffey** on Agricultural Outlook.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on a Livestock Art Exhibit; **DeBoria Janifer** takes a look at women smokers and osteoporosis; **Lynn Wyvill** reports on turkey consumption.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- **Agriculture Update**, five minutes of USDA farm program info, in news desk format with B-Roll footage.

Available on Satellite **Westar 4**, Transponder **12D (Channel 23)**, audio **6.2 or 6.8**:

THURSDAY7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT

SATURDAY10 - 10:45 a.m., EDT

MONDAY8 - 8:45 a.m., EDT

OFFMIKE

YEILDS...are generally disappointing in the harvest that is underway say **Mike Railsback** (WDAF, Kansas City, MO.). Timely rains in northern sections of the state helped, but other regions have been very dry. At the state fair Mike served as M.C. of the sales of champions. Bids were one of the highest on record. Mike recently received the Media Conservation Award from the Mid America Association of Conservation Districts.

300,000 PEOPLE...are expected to attend the Farm Progress Show near Dalton City, Illinois says **Gwinner Snyder** (WDZQ, Decatur). He'll cover events and the activities in the 60 acres of tents. Another event on his schedule is participation in a combine celebrity race at a local speedway as part of the station's promotion effort.

WINTER WHEAT...is being planted in dry soil with the hope that rain will soon follow says **Steve Stein** (KGNO Dodge City, Kan.). A fair to good harvest of grains was obtained, reflecting dry conditions.

Farm Broadcasters Letter



Office of Public Affairs
Radio-TV Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
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NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH WEEK...is October 13-19. Its an opportunity for your station to highlight the importance to parents and children of nutrition education. USDA radio & TV plan coverage of an event on Capitol Hill during the week that will show innovations in school lunches.

1992 AGRICULTURE OUTLOOK CONFERENCE...is scheduled this coming December 3-5 at USDA's Jefferson Auditorium in Washington, D.C. Major portions will be televised and transmitted live on Westar V, channel 23. Events scheduled can be obtained by FAX 202 447-5865.

HEADS UP...on phone number changes at USDA radio & TV offices in Washington, D.C. effective October 26, 1991. Three-digit prefix is changing to 720. Area code and last four numbers remain the same. For instance, offices of the radio & TV Division will be reached on 202-720-4330 on that date. Radio daily Newsline number will not change, 202-448-8358/59.


VIC POWELL

Chief, Radio & TV Division